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AUTHOR	Sanders, Judi
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ABSTRACT

An ethnographic study examined slang as spoken on campuses of two universities in the United States, one on the West Coast and one in the Midwest. Subjects were students from Intercultural Communication classes, who served as participant/observers and data gatherers. Subjects were instructed to collect slang terms that they heard on campus and, along with each term, they were to provide a definition for the term and a sample discourse. The terms for each sample were then independently examined for themes through the process of analytic induction, and differences in emergent themes were resolved through discussion. Results indicated a total of 64 themes and, of these themes: 56 (88%) were present in the data for both universities; 3 (5%) were found only at the Midwestern university; and 5 (8%) themes were found only at the university in the West. Results revealed that across the miles college students use slang to talk about very similar themes. However, local culture generates unique meanings for common terms and unique terms for common meanings. Findings suggest that the individual is an active agent in making selections about how to talk. This study provides evidence for a theory of communication grounded in the intersection of the global, local, and individual--it reconceptualizes the roles and relationships of both culture and the individual. (Includes 5 tables of data and 4 endnotes; contains 12 references.) (CR)

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Airheads, Dorks and Wimps

An Alternate View of Cultural Communication

Judi Sanders
Department of Communication
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
3801 West Temple
Pomona, CA 91768
(909) 869-3527
email: jasanders@csupomona.edu
web: http://www.intranet.csupomona.edu/~jasanders

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Airheads, Dorks and Wimps:

An Alternate View of Cultural Communication

Abstract

This study is an ethnographic examination of slang as spoken on two university campuses in the United States. It reveals that across the miles college students use slang to talk about very similar themes. However, local culture is performed that generates unique meanings for common terms and unique terms for common meanings. Further, the individual is an active agent in making selections about how to talk. A general theory of communication is thus proposed considering the intersection of the global, local, and individual in the process of talking.

Chill, yaars. No need to wig out. Schoolin' these gigs can be hairy but if you settle it's a kick down. I'm not talkin' smack. Getting here is gravy if you don't spaz and get with it. Just cop my rap.[1]

Discourse can be heard in the native voices wherever one travels. One such site is college campuses. As with other speech communities, college students speak a language of their own. This is popularly referred to as slang. Slang is composed of terms that are intersubjectified within a particular community but recognized as either nonstandard terms or nonstandard usages. As such, slang is largely oral and not found in formal dictionaries (except for collections of slang). However, slang is fundamentally no different than any other form of language. It is the performance of culture (Philipsen, 1987). Slang merely provides a particularly obvious site of discourse because it contrasts with the familiar. Consequently, slang provides a useful form of discourse for the analysis of cultural processes.

While slang could probably be found within any speech community, it is especially prevalent among college students. To be a college student is to speak slang; it is a membering process (see, e.g., Carbaugh, 1990; Eble, 1996; Hecht et al., 1993). Students use this language to distinguish themselves from generations that have come before them and those that will follow. It should thus reflect how the culture defines itself (Carbaugh, 1990; Hecht, Collier & Ribeau., 1993). As a result, the focus of this study was on the discourse of college slang as situated in two speech communities on two different, geographically distant, university campuses.

So what? Why is college slang worthy of scholarly attention? It is in language performance that cultural communication is clearly demonstrated. Varenne (1992) argues that

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culture operates at both local and global levels. Individuals come together to coconstruct local cultures. Local cultures coconstruct global cultures. In any given situation the influence of the local or the global may wax or wane. To ascribe a particular speech behavior to a cultural pattern likely foregrounds the global--but the global may be superseded by the local. The comparison of slang spoken at geographic dissimilar universities thus allows an examination of both the local and the global. While the experience of being a college student (global culture) might be reflected in similarities among slang utilized, local culture could be reflected in dissimilarities. Thus, the comparison of slang usage at different universities allows an examination of varying levels of cultural communication. As a result, a new perspective on cultural communication, and intercultural communication theory, might emerge.

Current theory in intercultural communication is dominated by the psychological model. Thus, Lieberman (1994) says:

> Intercultural communication theory is grounded in the concept that participants in any interaction bring with them a "system of symbols and meanings" . . . that shapes their perceptions of a shared phenomenon. Based upon this approach to intercultural communication, much of the research in the field and the teaching of intercultural communication in our own college classrooms has claimed that differences (for example, values, beliefs, attitudes, frames of reference) are the basic variables that influence these perceptions. (p. 178) [citations omitted]

This view is essentially a cognitive one: the individual brings with him/herself a set of

culturally generated cognitive constructs that shape how he or she interacts. Thus, because different cultures generate different cognitive constructs, interaction in intercultural settings is reasoned to be particularly difficult. Under this view, one would expect slang at varying college campuses to be essentially the same because the value-shaping overarching culture is the same.

While Lieberman's view represents the predominant voice in intercultural communication theory, it is not the only voice. A contrastive view, arguing that such communication is completely constructed in the moment, is presented by Moerman (1988)

> . . . face-to-face interaction is the constitutive substrate of social phenomena. Every thing that matters socially--meanings, class, roles, emotions, guilt, aggression, and so forth and so on--is socially constructed. Theories about how such things are learned and experienced, and about how to study them, which are not built to the specifications that interaction requires are wrong. . . .Anthropology has lately . . . come to realize that such traditional explainers of social action as "class," "ethnicity," "values," etc., are not <u>things</u>, but processes manipulated or, more radically, composed during the course of interaction. (pp. 1-2) [citations omitted; emphasis in original]

Thus Moerman argues that interaction produces culture including those very phenomena that are said to shape cultural differences in interaction. Under this view, slang at varying college campuses should likewise be varying because slang is a product of the moment of interaction.

In essence, Lieberman's view foregrounds the global while Moerman's foregrounds the local. This study demonstrates that either view of cultural or intercultural communication is unsatisfactory. To describe intercultural communication as difficult because culture shapes

individual perceptions resulting in people from different cultures having differing perceptions and thus being unable to understand each other misses the mark. Likewise to ignore the constructed culture as an influence inspiring and constraining individual choice is equally inappropriate. Intercultural communication, and communication in general is neither solely cognitively caused or completely impromptu in the moment. Rather, the talk reflects the intersection of multiple levels of influence. The talk is culturing.

The current study provides a site for the examination of the influences of both the global and local cultural influences on interaction. It does so through an ethnographic examination of communication. Carbaugh (1989) argues, "Cultural discourses are powerful in their ability to define and shape human praxis. An understanding of them is necessary for the humane theory and practice of human communication" (p. 184). Thus the focus on actual communication as a method of understanding communication is justified.

Discourse may be studied from many perspectives. As members of a culture talk they are culturing: enacting and performing their culture, establishing membership and creating borders (Philipsen, 1987). The examination of how members of a particular culture talk should thus reveal their native notions of their culture (Hecht, et al., 1993). Consequently, to understand cultural communication, the codes of speaking must be examined (Carbaugh, 1989). College slang is such a code and its examination as performed on two different campuses allows a view of both the local and the global culturing processes.

Methods

The settings for this research were two medium-sized universities. One of the universities is located in a large culturally diverse urban area on the West Coast of the United

States. The population of this university is likewise diverse, with no single ethnic group constituting a majority of the student population. The second university is located in a medium-sized Midwestern city that has a high level of cultural homogeneity. The student population of this university is primarily Euro-American. The universities are approximately 1,700 miles apart.

At each university students from Intercultural Communication classes were recruited to serve as participant-observers and data gatherers. Students were instructed to collect slang terms that they heard used on campus.[2] Along with each term students were to provide a definition for the term and a discourse sample. Once all terms on a campus had been collected the terms were distributed to all students in Intercultural Communication for native verification of terms, definitions and usages. When students disagreed about whether or not a term was "campus slang," discussion ensued and the term was included if at least two students agreed that the term was so used. This process resulted in additional definitions for some terms. This generated a list of over 1,500 terms for the Western university and over 800 terms for the Midwestern university. Difference in the number of terms is primarily a reflection of the number of data gatherers rather than a difference in the number of actual slang terms used on campus.

The terms for each sample were then independently examined for themes through the process of analytic induction (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The data from each university were subjected to separate analytic inductions by native speakers. Differences in emergent themes were resolved through discussion.[3] All terms were then classified according to the themes discovered.

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Because of the volume of data, a sample was selected for additional analysis. Terms reflecting the theme "negative person labels" were chosen for this further analysis. This theme was designated because it reflects a relatively universal human experience: negative labeling of the other. In addition, much theory in intercultural communication has argued that other is a key concept in cultural communication. Indeed, prominent theory holds that the tendency to see persons different from ourselves as others can cause difficulties in such interactions and negative evaluations (see, e.g., Gudykunst & Kim, 1997). The negative person labels sample was again inductively analyzed for subthemes reflecting the types of negative person labels. Comparisons of similarities and differences both in subthemes and term usage from both university samples were then made.

Results

Analysis of data sets from both universities revealed a total of sixty-four themes (with a few terms coded in the additional category of "miscellaneous" where no other terms appeared to share the same theme). Of these themes, fifty-six (or eighty-eight percent) were present in the data for both universities. Three themes (or five percent) were found only at the Midwestern university and five themes (or eight percent) were found only at the Western university. A listing of the themes and their presence in each sample is found in Table 1.

With one exception, no reasons were apparent for why a theme was present in one university and not in the other. It may merely be that while there are slang terms for these themes at each university these terms are not so prominent as to be heard in daily speech. For example, that there were slang terms for being tired in the Midwestern university sample but not in the Western university sample should not lead to the conclusion that there

necessarily are no slang terms for being tired in the West. Rather, this theme may merely not be as prevalent. The one exception was the theme of "surfing" that appeared in the data for the Western university but not in the data for the Midwestern university. This appears to reflect the obvious geographic difference (local influence) that the Western university is located near the ocean (where surfing is popular) while the Midwestern university is not. The identification of differences between the universities is evidence of local culturing effects.

Much more notable than the differences are the similarities. That eighty-eight percent of the themes appeared in both samples suggests that these represent ideas prevalent on both college campuses and perhaps college life in general. These themes reflect that students on both campuses have comparable concerns. College life on these campuses seems centered around relationships, emotions (positive and negative), attaining goals and possessions, being socially appropriate, performing, eating, money, the police, home, and school.

College students' lives reflect a high concern for relationships with others. This is exemplified in themes about: agreement/disagreement, requesting, attending/ignoring, body parts, body functions, communicating, friends, greeting/leave taking, laughing/joking, leaving, misleading, positive/negative/neutral person labels, personal characteristics, sex/sexual relationships. This probably reflects the fact that students are concerned about establishing lifelong relationships and see the college experience as one site for such establishment.

Closely related to the focus on relationships is an attention to fitting in or being socially appropriate. Themes such as complain/criticize, acting right, crazy/weird/strange, police, and treating unfairly/cruelly likewise reflect the attention to adherence to the norms that the global culture constructs and that are imposed on these cultures by the embracing

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culture

College life on these campuses also centers around emotions. Numerous themes reflect concern with the feeling or expression of emotions. More negative emotions are exemplified in the theme of anger/upset/bother. Positive emotions focus on feeling good/having fun. Related themes appear in activities that can lead to that state. These include: drugs/alcohol/tobacco, entertainment, excitement/relaxation, sports, and vomiting. This likewise reflects the life stage in which this culture resides: between carefree childhood and adult responsibilities.

Attaining goals and possessions is also reflected in the speech of these university students. They talk about cars/transportation, clothing, school, guns and taking/borrowing/stealing. This is probably also related to the theme of money. For most college students this is a time when they begin to have disposable income and begin to acquire desired possessions.

Performance is similarly regarded. The very nature of being a student places performance at the forefront of daily life for members of these speech communities. This is reflected in themes such as: at risk, difficulty/ease, good/bad performance, important/serious, and studying.

Other daily activities are also discernable in the speech of these college students. Thus, some themes identify eating, sleeping, home, and school. This indicates that students on these campuses talk not just about the dramatic, but also about the mundane (see, e.g., Duck, Rutt, Hurst, & Strejc, 1991).

Analyses of subthemes for the "Negative person labels" theme revealed a total of

twenty-one subthemes. Seventeen of these were present in both sets of data. Four themes were present only in the data from the Western university and no themes were present only in the data from the Midwestern university. These data appear in Table 2. Again the level of similarity is high, indicating a prominence of these subthemes as methods of evaluation for persons on both campuses, and the global culturing effect of being a college student. On both campuses persons are negatively evaluated for being fake, irresponsible, lazy, meticulous, immature, pretentious, sexually promiscuous, a social misfit, stubborn, stupid, unattractive, unclean, uncoordinated, using others, weak and weird.

Local culturing effects are also reflected in unique campus themes. Thus, students at the Western university negatively evaluate others around such themes as: misfortunate, overweight, tight with money, too sensitive/insensitive/obnoxious. While such evaluations may also occur at the Midwestern university, they do not appear prominently in the daily communication practices of the speakers.

The data samples also revealed similarities and differences in the usages of particular words. A number of terms were found in both samples that had equivalent meanings providing evidence of the global influence of being a college student. These terms, appearing in Table 3, indicate a correspondence of usage across both universities. Thus, students at both campuses ascribe similar meanings to airheads, dorks and wimps.

Two primary term-based differences were notable in the data. First, some terms appeared uniquely on one campus only. This does not mean that these terms were necessarily unknown to students on the other campus but rather that their use was not prominent in the spoken culture of the campus. These terms appear in Table 4. Second, several terms

appeared in both data sets but had different meanings on each campus. A term in this group would be familiar as a word to students on both campuses but would be given a different meaning in usage and thus be likely lead to misunderstandings should the unlikely event of intercampus communication occur. These terms are identified in Table 5. The differences in the existence of terms as well as the meanings of terms reflects uniquely local culturing effects.

Discussion

The data here reveal that students talk about very similar concepts across both campuses. They talk in both similar and different ways. The similarities and the differences are reflected in themes, terms and meanings.

The themes isolated here reflect the cultural experience of these students. They are one manner of how culture is enacted and performed. At the global level students distant in geography share many cultural experiences. In large measure the themes reflect what it is like to be a college student in the United States.

The identification of these themes therefore reveals how students at these two campuses construct and perform their cultures. Moreover it suggests that they do so in very comparable ways. The experience of being a college student results in similar codes despite distant geographic locations. Although this could be evidence for the cognitive view, it is likewise clear that culture is operating at multiple levels; that is, there are multiple levels of culture involved. While being a college student identifies one level of culture, geographic location identifies another. Even though the themes themselves are little variant on the basis of locations, the meanings of some terms do vary. This suggests that while this vocabulary is

socially transmitted, local groups stamp their own unique meanings on terms. Geographic dissimilarities point to the significance of the local. The experience of being a college student is reflected in the talk of students in the West and the Midwest, and the experience of being geographically cultured is also apparent from their talk.

The wax and wane of the global and the local are particularly illustrated by term usage on both campuses. In numerous instances the same terms appeared in both samples. How are these terms transmitted across the miles? Although the answer to that question is beyond the scope of this research, the media would seem one clear source. For example, the television shows "The Wonder Years" and "Beavis and Butthead" have probably contributed to the transmission of the term "butthead" since it is prominently used in both shows. The global influence of the embracing culture is evident in this example where the term and meaning are the same at each university.

The waning of the global and the waxing of the local is also apparent in these data. The global primarily generates themes discussed on each campus but the local often determines the words used to discuss those themes. In the West an irresponsible person is a scag while in the Midwest such a person is a dogger. Further, in some instances although the global may result in the transmission of a particular term, the local provides it with a unique meaning. Thus, in the West a skeezer is a sexually promiscuous person but in the Midwest a skeezer is someone who uses someone else.

Another intersection of the global and the local is apparent in term choice as one is talking. The global level themes provide both constraints and inspirations for individual action. The socially constructed vocabulary represented by the geographically local culture

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provides codes for talk. Yet, the individual must make the choice about which particular term to select. Nearly twenty-five years ago, Burling (1970) argued: "So the constraints that bear upon our use of language can be sorted roughly into at least four major types which we can label as grammatical, referential, situational, and personal" (p. 7). The grammatical is clearly a global constraint. The referential may be either global or local. The situational is local. The person is the most local or individual. The choice between labeling an individual perceived to be lacking in intelligence as a goon, not the sharpest knife in the drawer or two bricks short of a load is one uniquely made by the individual Midwestern college speaker. For the Western student the global student culture will inspire talk evaluating the intelligence of others, the local western culture will provide a rich vocabulary with which to enact that talk, but the individual student uniquely will make the specific lexical choice to call someone a lele. It is the global culture that suggests and inspires this theme, the local culture that constructs this vocabulary and constrains the choices, and the individual who does so choose. Talk thus reflects the intersection of global and local cultures and the individual.

To take the view that communication is cognitively determined ignores the influence of unique local culturing effects and individual choice. Likewise, to see communication as completely socially constructed in the moment ignores the constraining and inspiring effects of the global culture. Either view provides an inadequate explanation of the process of communication or the basis for the study of intercultural communication. Rather, the development of theory in intercultural communication and communication in general must recognize that there are multiple levels of culturing. Our communication, whether intercultural or intracultural, reflects the intersection of these levels.

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The Future

The global culture of academic scholarship suggests that each researcher should acknowledge limitations to his/her research and suggest how future research might further explore this area of scholarship. Likewise, the culture suggests themes appropriately addressed such as limitations in data collection and analysis methods. The individual researcher selects the particular linguistic and argumentative choices to address these themes. This section is designed to address those concerns.

Carbaugh (1989/90) argues:

> . . . ethnographers build their fieldwork and reports around the twin pillars of (1) description of particular instances, which (2) reveals something general about phenomena. These two basic goals involve continual assessments of descriptive adequacy and theoretical rigor. About descriptive adequacy, one asks, is the pattern represented with its full contextual force? Is the life of the people breathed into these words. . . . The ethnographer also seeks to render the pattern as saying something of general interest. Here, the ethnographer responds to the question: why should the audience care about a description of this cultural practice? Responses take two general forms. First, because it is there, and second, because it tells us something important about communication. (p. 262)

The methods of this research might well be criticized as not fully contexted. Rather than gathering conversations and searching for the use of slang in conversational context, terms were foregrounded and extracted from context. Even though definitions and discourse samples were provided by native speaker participant observers, a more highly contexted

approach might reveal differences. As such, one future direction for research would be to gather data in naturally occurring conversations and examine how slang is used in such conversations.

A second limitation might be raised regarding the nature of the data gathering. Would a longer study reveal additional terms and themes? Would interviews with natives provide additional insight about both these terms and themes? This concern is particularly relevant for those themes found on one campus but not on the other. Additional research might well seek to interview natives about the nonpresent themes to discover if they are in fact present and what terms are used to represent them. Likewise additional insight might be provided by interviewing native speakers about familiarity with terms not revealed in the data sample present from their campus.

Clearly then there is room for additional research on the nature and use of slang on these and other college campuses. However, that does not address Carbaugh's second issue. Why is this important? The importance derives from both the particular and the general. In the particular this study provides a rich description of a particular kind of talk as practiced on two college campuses. It generates insight into the nature of what it is like to be a student at these universities. The similarities between the two samples argue for comparable experiences across universities in the United States.

Beyond the particular, this study also enriches the general. It provides evidence for a theory of communication grounded in the intersection of the global, local and individual. It reconceptualizes the roles and relationships of both culture and the individual. In Carbaugh's (1989/90) words, it yields "a theory of local communication practice . . . which may suggest

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more general principles about communication" (p. 263).

A further examination of this theoretic position might well find a site in less obvious communication practices. For example, a study of everyday conversations, including both standard and nonstandard language choices should reveal similar intersecting principles. Future research should seek confirmation of this principle.

Conclusion

While much research in intercultural communication, and communication in general has variously suggested that communication is cognitively determined or socially constructed, this study suggests more complex relationships. An examination of slang spoken on two university campuses indicates that students talk about similar themes across the miles. Moreover, they do so with both similar and different vocabularies. This suggests that at the global level, college life generates a culture that reflects common themes among those within the culture. Further, some vocabulary is transmitted across large geographic distances. Global culture wanes to the influence of local culture in particular codes spoken on each campus. In addition, while global and local cultures inspire and constrain talk, individuals make unique choices as they practice their everyday life and enact their cultures. Airheads, dorks and wimps span the country, but dishtowels, dweebs and doorknobs only live in the West. Which failed your last test?[4]

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Endnotes

1. Roughly translated: Relax friends. Explaining these matters can be difficult but if you calm down, it is easy. I'm not misleading you. Understanding this is easy if you don't get too excited and try to understand. Listen to what I am telling you.

2. The restrictions on collection of these data were that the terms: a) be used on campus, b) not be used for the oppression of particular groups of people (such as ethnophaulisms), and c) be such that the native speaker would not be afraid to use the term in mixed-gender company. While focussing on the last two restrictions would yield interesting data, these were not the focus of this study.

3. Differences were of the nature that some terms were classified by native speakers by parts of speech (such as verbs). Speakers were encouraged to look for thematic content rather than parts of speech and ultimately terms were classified on that basis.

4. The author wishes to gratefully acknowledge of insightful comments of Dr. Leslie Baxter, University of Iowa, in response to an earlier draft of this paper as well as her inspiration and consideration in difficult times.

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Table 1.

Slang Themes

Theme	W.U.	M.U.	Theme	W.U.	M.U.
Agreement/disagreement	x	x	Laugh, joke tease	x	x
Anger, upset, bother	x	x	Leave	x	x
Ask for	x	x	Lots (intensifiers)	x	x
Attend/ignore	x	x	Menstruation	x	
At risk/in trouble	x	x	Military	x	x
Bad place		x	Mislead, fool, be fake	x	x
Body parts	x	x	Money	x	x
Body Functions/bathroom	x	x	Negative labels	x	x
Cars/transportation	x	x	Negative person labels	x	x
Clothing	x	x	Neutral person labels	x	x
Commands to act "right"	x	x	No	x	x
Communicating	x	x	Performance (good/bad)	x	x
Complain/criticize	x	x	Personal characteristics	x	x

Note. W.U. = Western University; M.U. = Midwestern University. (table continues)

Theme	W U.	M U.	Theme	W U	M U
Contractions	x	x	Police	x	x
Crave, need, desire		x	Positive labels	x	x
Crazy, weird, strange	x	x	Positive person labels	x	x
Difficulty/ease	x	x	Reality/belief/disbelief	x	x
Distance, rural	x	x	Residence	x	x
Drugs, alcohol, tobacco	x	x	Sad, depressed	x	
Entertainment	x	x	School	x	x
Excitement/relaxation	x	x	Search for	x	x
Feel good, have fun	x	x	Sex/sexual relationships	x	x
Food/eating	x	x	Sleep	x	x
Friends	x	x	Sports (general)	x	x
Get rid of	x	x	Stop	x	x
Greeting/leave taking	x	x	Study	x	x
Guns	x	x	Surfing	x	
Hurry	x	x	Take, borrow, steal	x	x

(table continues)

Theme	W.U.	M.U.	Theme	W.U.	M.U.
Important, serious	x	x	Time	x	x
Informal	x		Tired		x
Information	x		Treat unfairly, cruelly	x	x
Injure, kill	x	x	Vomit	x	x

Table 2.

Subthemes in Negative Person Labels

Subtheme	W.U.	M.U.	Subtheme	W.U.	M.U.
Fake	x	x	Stubborn/nosey	x	x
Irresponsible	x	x	Stupid	x	x
Lazy	x	x	Tight with money	x	
Meticulous	x	x	Too sensitive/ insensitive/obnoxious	x	
Misfortunate	x		Unattractive	x	x
Naive/immature	x	x	Unclean	x	x
Other	x	x	Uncoordinated	x	x
Overweight	x		User	x	x
Pretentious	x	x	Weak	x	x
Sexually promiscuous/ unsatisfactory	x	x	Weird	x	x
Social misfit	x	x			

Table 3.

Cross-sample Terms with Same Meanings

Subtheme	Term	Subtheme	Term
Fake	poser, wannabe	Stupid	airhead, butthead, dingbat, ditz, dork
Lazy	couch potato, slacker		
Meticulous	anal	Lazy	freeloader
Sexually promiscuous	ho	Weak	wimp
Social misfit	geek, nerd		

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Table 4.

Unique Terms by Campus

Subtheme	Western University Unique Terms	Midwestern University Unique Terms
Fake	kook, pseudo, puppet	faut pas
Irresponsible	flake, jonser, loser, scag	dogger
Lazy	houseplant, lazy goat, lurp, slug	loser, oxygen thief
Meticulous		prude
Misfortunate	a blow it, blower, goner, shlameal, shlamazel, to'e up	
Naive/immature	F.O.B., puppy	catty, infant
Other	snapper (complainer)	punk (bad), stiff (boring)
Overweight	heifer, Mrs. Marsh, oinker	
Pretentious	artsy-fartsy, county, icy, Miss Thing, souped, suited/booted	pretty boy, snot
Stubborn/nosey	barnacle, inspector, lifer, she/he bugs	lurk, pain

(table continues)

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Subtheme	Western University Unique Terms	Midwestern University Unique Terms
Sexually promiscuous	beast, bimbo, cheapster, d.s. man, diminishing returns, douche bag, hoddie, horndog, hosebag, jezebel, mattress back, meathook, moist, ripe, scank, skeeza, skeezer, slam hound, sleaze, sleep around, slut, strawberry, tired, tramp	dog, hoochie, player, working girl
Social misfit	barney, beev, biogeek, gadoot, knob, loner, mofu, pofte, psycho barney, Richard Cranium, rubble, sleezer, space cadet, square	dork, L7, melvin, wallflower
Tight with money	scrooge, tightwad	
Too sensitive/ insensitive/ obnoxious	fifi, flaming, fruitloop, hero, hemorrhoid, jaggle, jerk, left brainer, pain in the neck, schmuck, twit, wanker	

table continues)

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Subtheme	Western University Unique Terms	Midwestern University Unique Terms
Stupid	bonehead, chicken neck, chickey monkey, crack baby, deadhead, derelict, dishtowel, doof, doorknob, dufus, dumb jock, dweeb, erma, gomer, goof, hoser, lele, lobsterbrain, looneytoon, lucy, lugnut, maroon, meathead, pinhead, pokey, psycho betty, retread, rita/ricky, snot head, spaceboy/spacegirl, zoon dweebie	chowder head, goon, not the sharpest knife in the drawer, sap, twit, two bricks short of a load, tool
Unattractive	beat by the ugly stick, beat, booger, chow hound, coming up short, disco biscuits, fred, fugly, gancher, hag, mud duck, pizza face, stub, swizzle stick, wilma	gomer, goober
Unclean	cheez ball, scumball	mange, slob

(table continues)

Subtheme	Western Univ Unique Terms	Mid-western Univ Unique Terms
Uncoordinated	clod, goon, hick, klutz, oaf, stooge, thor, too white, whiteboy	gimp
User	gold digger, leech	hustler, mooch, skeezer, slacker, sleazebag, slick, sponge
Weak		pussy, skirt, weenie
Weird	a couple of croutons short of a salad, beamt, bozo, dork, goob, loc, screwy louie, soft in the head, twid, weird harold, weirdo	basket case, freak, loopy, psycho, wacked

Table 5.

Terms with Different Meanings Across Campuses

Term	Western University Meaning	Midwestern University Meaning
chowder head	unattractive	stupid
dork	stupid	stupid or social misfit
gomer	stupid	unattractive
goon	uncoordinated	stupid
loser	irresponsible	lazy
psycho	stupid or social misfit	weird
skeezer	promiscuous	user
slacker	lazy	lazy or user
sleazebag	promiscuous	user
twit	obnoxious	stupid

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